

Application No. 09/543,764
Inventor: John L. Howes

Art Unit 2165

Examiner: James H. Zurita
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AMENDMENT A - CLEAN VERSION

While selection of an appropriate liquid coating base 24 may be largely sufficient for the selection of an appropriate primer which will be completely obscured by the finish coat, and may similarly be largely determinative of substantially transparent liquid coating product 36 such as varnish, as well as being determinative of adhesives such as mastic which are covered by another surface such as tile, the most important characteristic of the finish coat obtained with the application of a liquid coating product 36 for most people is generally considered to be the color which is endlessly variable and invariably obtained by the addition of varying quantities of different colorants 25. The ability of a consumer 10 to select from a large number of different colors and order liquid coating product 36 of a particular, custom, color directly from a supplier without having a local retailer open a container of standard color paint, add colorant 25, and thoroughly mix the resulting paint which the consumer 10 must then transport from the local retailer is considered fundamental to the benefits derived from a fulfillment of the principles relating to the instant invention.

Another aspect considered important to an average consumer 10 is the appropriate quantity. A can of paint may specify a coverage range in square feet but this may be beyond the comprehension of the novice or less mathematically inclined consumer 10. While area in square feet is simply the product of the two relevant linear dimensions for a rectangular area, and most walls are rectangular, the actual usage is also dependent upon other factors such as temperature, which affects the viscosity of liquid coating product 36 and hence the thickness of the coat applied; and the quality of the surface to coated. A given area of concrete block wall, for example, will require far more liquid coating product 36 than a drywall surface of the same area. The method of application is also relevant. Application with a brush is inherently more efficient than with a roller which absorbs liquid coating product 36 which cannot effectively be retrieved and also requires a pan which retains unusable residue. If a consumer 10 intends to paint an apartment with the help of friends on a weekend, for example, the number of people using rollers for the application of the same liquid coating product 36 will affect the quantity effectively required. In this case the consumer will likely be more concerned with having a sufficient quantity than in usage efficiency.

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For this reason it is considered desirable to separate a computer 17 based customer order subsystem 20 from a computer 17 based production subsystem 21 despite the need for information transfer between the two. The production subsystem 21 ideally governs the production line 22 in order to achieve automation and flexibility in the same. Input data comprising appropriate customer order information 51 are preferably utilized in two coordinated ways with regard to the production line 22. It is suggested that the order data be compiled and processed into parameters governing production in achievement of batching with respect to the use of liquid coating base 24 which is preferably disposed into empty containers 23, as depicted in FIGS 2 & 3 and implied in FIGS 1 & 4. Batching is also recommended for the addition of colorant 25 in achievement of particular, custom, colors and it is specifically suggested that customer order information 51 be transferred, in coordination with batching, onto each open container with colorant 35, in identification of the content therein preferably including the customer name, delivery address, delivery date, and volume of each liquid coating product 36 and the number of containers 23 utilized in fulfillment of each order.

As shown in FIGS 1 - 4 the containerized liquid coating product 36, preferably carrying a label 50 with the customer order information 51 detailed above clearly printed thereon and or a bar or other digital code 52 by which such information may be readily retrieved by a scanner 37, is transferred from the end of the production line 22 to shipping 27 from which it is then taken by suitable transport 30 to the location identified by the customer delivery address 40. Shipping 27, represented simply as an area within the confines of the remote supplier 29, preferably comprises an area in which orders are assembled and packaged for delivery 'pick-up' by a commercial transport 30 service and wherein batching by order and delivery date is preferably observed. For this purpose and for effecting a change in status, both in receipt from the production line 22 and in shipment of the order, in the production subsystem 21 shipping 27 preferably possesses a computer monitor 14 with a direct line connection to the computer 17 in which the production subsystem 21 is maintained and operated.

With regard to the preferred embodiments of the principles relating to the present invention